

THE CHRISTIAN

IN HIS RELATIONS TO
THE CHURCH, THE WORLD,
AND THE FAMILY.

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THE CHRISTIAN

IN HIS RELATIONS TO

THE CHURCH, THE WORLD, AND THE
FAMILY.

A Course of Lectures.

BY

DANIEL MOORE, M.A.,

CHAPLAIN IN ORDINARY TO THE QUEEN, AND VICAR OF
HOLY TRINITY, PADDINGTON:

Author of Hulsean Lecture on "The Age and the Gospel," &c.



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P R E F A C E.



THE following Lectures were delivered to the Author's own congregation, in the ordinary course of his pulpit ministrations. They are purposely printed as they were delivered. Their recommendation, to those who asked for their publication, was their "practicalness":—the concrete presentments, contained in them of duties, which, in the abstract, all are ready to acknowledge. A motto, in the following page, expresses a belief that the lack of this practical element is a frequent drawback upon the permanent benefit of our public ministrations. At all events, for the free introduction of applications, taken from every-day life, the writer is not sorry to quote the authority of such a name as that of Bishop Butler.

Stars are of mighty use: the night
Is dark and long,
The road foul; and where one goes right
Six may go wrong.
One twinkling ray
Shot o'er some cloud,
May clear much away,
And guide a crowd.

God's saints are shining lights: who stays
Here long, must pass
O'er dark hills, swift streams, and steep ways
As smooth as glass;
But these all night,
Like candles, shed
Their beams, and light
Us into bed.

They are indeed our pillar-fires,
Seen as we go;
They are that city's shining spires
We travel to.
A sword-like gleam
Kept man from sin
First *out*; this beam
Will guide him *in*.

HENRY VAUGHAN.

“General exhortations to piety, abstracted from the particular circumstances of it; though people be touched with them, yet when they go away from Church, they scarce know where to begin, or how to set about what they are exhorted to. Particular rules and directions concerning the times and circumstances of performing acknowledged duties, bring religion nearer to practice, and prudently recommended, would have an influence upon the people.”—*Bishop Butler's Charge to the Clergy of Durham*, 1751.

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THE CHRISTIAN.



LECTURE I.

THE CHRISTIAN IN HIS RELATIONS TO THE CHURCH.

“And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.”—ACTS xi. 26.

SUCH is the first mention we have of a name which, as ointment poured forth, has overspread and filled the world. How came the followers of Jesus of Nazareth by that title? and by whom was it first applied? Not by the Jews, we are sure; for that had been in itself a recognition of our Lord's Messiahship; a tacit admission that he was in very deed the Prophet, the Anointed one. Whereas, as we know, the whole nation looked upon Him as a Galilean impostor—their own lips being foremost to bring about a fulfilment of the prophecy, “He shall be called a Nazarene.”*

* Matt. ii. 23.

Neither was it by the followers of Christ themselves, that the name of Christian was in the first instance assumed, however willingly they might consent to its general adoption afterwards. The names by which, in the first years of the Gospel, they commonly spoke of themselves, and by which they were chiefly known among their friends, were those of "disciples," "believers," "brethren," or sometimes, "they that call upon the Lord Jesus Christ." They would have a pious shrinking from a form of title, which would seem to put their Divine Master on a like footing with Epicurus or Pythagoras, and themselves as the mere members of a new philosophic sect.

We need not hesitate, therefore, to attribute the name of "CHRISTIAN" to a heathen origin, invented by the adversaries of the Gospel, as a term of disparagement and contempt. This view is fairly borne out by the context of the only two other passages, besides the text, where the word Christian occurs. Thus there is no doubt that the words of Agrippa to the Apostle, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian," were intended to cast a sneer on the new religionists; whilst, in the passage in St. Peter, "If any man suffer as a Christian," the words merely

express the name by which their enemies called them. And, therefore, the Apostle goes on, if for this opprobrious name a man suffer, "let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this behalf"—literally, "in this name."* And, from these times, the disciples did begin to glory in the name. They felt it to be one which persecution had dignified and ennobled. And just as "the cross," in itself a badge of infamy and degradation, became afterwards to be reckoned among the proudest ensigns of Christian heraldry, so the name CHRISTIAN, divested of all its pagan associations, as a stigma and a reproach, became one of the proudest titles which God's heroes could lay claim to; till the words, "I am a Christian," mingled with the expiring throes of martyrdom, and became the watchword with which saints entered heaven.

A CHRISTIAN, therefore, as "the highest style of man;" a Christian, as a mighty power in the world—its light to illumine, its salt to purify, its leaven to saturate with all beneficent influences, its strength to enrich, and adorn, and bless—this is a subject which may not unfitly furnish matter for a few practical meditations. The line of treatment

* 1 Pet. iv. 16.

which it is intended to follow out will be sufficiently indicated by the general title given to the course—"The CHRISTIAN in his relations to the CHURCH, the WORLD, and the FAMILY." The necessity of such relations is assumed. Christians are not an aggregation of detached units. Each one is a force in the moral world—acting and acted upon, as inevitably as material bodies moving in the universe of space. The law of gravitation is not more fixed and unalterable than that law of the spiritual kingdom—"None of us liveth to himself." *

These relations, however, assumed, there must be duties belonging to them. Neither is Holy Scripture silent as to what these duties are. As disciples, as bread-winners, as citizens, as husbands, as parents, as masters, we find our responsibilities laid down for us, in the scheme of Gospel ethics, with all plainness and simplicity. And, by taking heed thereto, all who, whether at Antioch or elsewhere, "profess and call themselves Christians," shall be taught how to "hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life."

As the subject of a first lecture, I have

* Rom. xiv. 7.

taken the Christian in his relations to THE CHURCH. By the Church, we all agree to understand a congregation of faithful men, joined together by a bond of spiritual unities, "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."* Hence that word of the Apostle, "We, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another;"† that is, interested one in another, sympathising one with another, living one for another. And, on this, arise manifold joint relations. We are confederate together against common foes. We mourn together over common strifes and hindrances. We work together for the common prosperity. In the Word and ordinances, we all acknowledge a common source of strength; and, in holy sacraments, we do all "eat the same spiritual meat, and do all drink the same spiritual drink." Let us look at the Christian, in his relations to some of these.

I. First, what is the proper attitude of the Christian towards the *enemies of the Church*?—that is, of the Gospel, of revelation, of the truth of God? We cannot conceal from ourselves that

* Eph. iv. 5, 6.

† Rom. xii. 5.

the Church has such enemies ; that there is, in our day, and that among men of intellect and mark, a cast-off reverence for Holy Scripture ; a tendency to look upon Christianity, in its traditional and accepted forms, as a thing of the past ;—the dear truth of ages being degraded to the rank of a peradventure, and often to something lower than that. The proofs of this, as seen in our literature, as heard at lecture-halls, as uttered, without bated breath or whispering humbleness, at social gatherings, are patent everywhere, and constitute a phase of national life as impossible to deny, as it would be neither wise nor safe to ignore.

But how is a Christian man to bear himself towards these things ? Taking Scripture for our guide, the chief counsel I would offer is this—Do not needlessly meddle with these sceptical objections, still less be cast down by them. Writing to Timothy, the Apostle says, “ Avoid profane babblings and oppositions of science, falsely so called.”* Note the Apostle’s words, “ oppositions of science, falsely so called ” ; for he knew full well that, if the science be true science, opposition between one branch of it and another branch, could have no existence. Appear-

* 1 Tim vi. 20.

ance of contradiction there may be ; and in the history of theological controversy, nothing is more painful than to notice how, through the unwisdom of their respective advocates, religion and science have constantly seemed to be afraid of each other, jealous of each other, always appearing to think it impossible that they should sit side by side together on the throne of eternal truth. The strife and the jealousy are alike foolish. For, since the word of God and the works of God can never be contrary the one to the other, the discrepancy must be one of our own making ; and whether the mistake be on the side of the scientist or the religionist, we may contentedly leave it to time and riper knowledge to bring the reconciliation about. Meanwhile, for the private Christian, no better rule can be given than that of the Apostle to avoid these " profane babblings." And we can afford to avoid them. Evidence which has satisfied the mightiest intellects of the ages, may well satisfy us. The truth of God has no reserved rights against inquiry, and desires to have none. On the contrary, she challenges investigation, dares the manly argument to the encounter, fears not " the rocking of the battlements," knowing that her foundations can never be moved. Still, all men

are not born for this strife, are not, either by nature or education, equipped with the requisite weapons for it. And for *them* it must suffice to learn all their truth from Him who is "the Truth." *Their* faith centres and crystallises in a PERSON. All their theology is contained in that word, "I know WHOM I have believed."* They do not set lightly by well-reasoned defences of the truth, as it is in Jesus; but still their confidence is not in them, but in Him. His truth, they know, is imperishable. Cavils may abound. Heresy may wax bold. Systems of human philosophy may live through their little day, and the oppositions of science may perish by their own suicidal hands. But truth, Christ's truth, Gospel truth, is immortal. It partakes of the eternity of its Author, and must outlive all its foes:—"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away."

II. Neither is a passive and quiescent attitude less desirable for a Christian man, in relation to the *internal strifes and divisions of the Church*. For, besides being a necessary outcome of an age of great mental and religious activity, such things,

* 2 Tim. i. 12.

says the Apostle, have a special place and use in the Divine orderings;—"For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you."* And how shall they which are approved be made manifest better than by evincing towards all who differ from them a spirit of tolerant, generous, enlightened, and forbearing charity; casting off all narrow-grooved suspicions and distrusts, and not wishing to be like the friends of Job, by assuming that all the wisdom must necessarily be with themselves. The Apostle's counsel, in reference to such Church divisions, is "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others,"†—on the prejudices of others, on the educational partialities of others, on the honest misapprehensions and mistakes of others. At all events, in speaking of things, whether in the teaching or worship of others, of which we disapprove, and even believe to be contrary to sound doctrine, let us be careful that there be, in our words, no bitterness; in our statements, no exaggeration; that there be no imputation of an unacknowledged motive, and no charging of certain consequences upon the teaching we complain of, which those who hold by it neither

* 1 Cor. xi. 19.

† Phil. ii. 4.

intend nor allow. We may yield to none in our zeal for the truth, or in our love for it, and yet may believe that, after all, Gamaliel's is the best method of upholding it—"And now I say unto you, refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be found even to fight against God."*

III. Again, the Christian is to consider himself as standing in a certain relation to the working agencies and beneficent organisations of the Church. In our collect for Good Friday, looking upon all professing Christians as making up the whole body of the Church, we introduce the suffrage, "Receive our supplications and prayers, which we offer before Thee, for all estates of men in Thy holy Church, that every member of the same, in his vocation and ministry, may truly and godly serve Thee." And, in reference to the lay members of her body, the Church has never been slow, certainly is not in our day, in providing pious work for those who desire to be employed in it—for the young in our schools; for those who have leisure, in our districts;

* Acts v. 38.

for the elderly matron, or the retired merchant, in reading to our aged poor; and for the busiest of our busy men, in giving counsel and practical help in the organising and carrying out of good works. No Christian, of the true Antioch type, will allow himself to hide his talent in a napkin. If he have but one talent, the Church will find him a use for that one; so only he be in earnest to do something for Christ and His Gospel, and be anxious that, at the end of his Christian course, he may be able to say—"I have not run in vain, nor laboured in vain."

IV. But I must pass on to consider the Christian in his relations to the ordinances of the Church—the Lord's Day, the Lord's House, and especially to the regular and frequent participation of the Lord's Supper. Under this head, the point I am chiefly anxious to establish is, that every private Christian is a trustee of Divine ordinances—is appointed of God a conservator of things holy and consecrate, and, equally with the ordained minister of the sanctuary, is bound to see that God's sacred things do not, from his misuse or neglect of them, take any hurt.

Let us remember first, then, that as Christians,

we are trustees of the LORD'S DAY. I touch not upon the exploded fallacy of this being, originally, a Jewish institution, instead of being, as we all know it is, an ordinance hallowed of God at creation, and binding upon the religious conscience for all time. The Sabbath was made for man "before Abraham was"; and we rob man and rob God too, when, by our practice or example, we deprive the day of its sanctity—when by anything that we do, or by anything that we leave undone, we make the first day of the week to be in no way differentiated from any of the other six. Here, then, is the Christian's attitude towards the Lord's Day. He does not, unless called by necessity or duty, employ its sacred hours in any occupation which is definitely secular—which, in the eyes of servants and children, has the recognised week-day stamp upon it. He does not choose that, on that day, there should be seen in his hands the newspaper, the secular periodical, the light work of travel or fiction, possible as it is that some religious pickings might be got out of such books. Neither, again, if his correspondence has fallen into arrear, or calls of courtesy are overdue, does he deem it well that the time required for such things

should be taken out of the narrow stint he is asked to give unto God, and not taken from the six days he so freely gives unto the world.

V. Again, for the Lord's House, with all its privileges and opportunities and blessings, the Christian is a trustee. He has a duty to discharge in respect of his regular and frequent attendance there. The days were dark days, in the history of the Jewish Church, when the worshippers at the sanctuary were wont to say one to another, "Behold what a weariness is it!" and even when the close of the Sabbath was longed for impatiently, that they might get back to their occupations and "sell corn."* And the sign is not a healthy sign among us, that, by many calling themselves Christians, the ordinances of the sanctuary are held in light esteem. By how many is a single attendance at church, on the Lord's day, made to be a payment in full of all sanctuary demands upon them, for the whole week—the Sunday evensong, the daily prayer, the morning weekday lecture, the evening devotional meeting—all being reckoned among things, which the God of ordinances does not care about, or of which *our*

* Amos viii. 5.

ripened Christian character does not stand in need.

Whether such a low estimate of the value of ordinances receives any countenance from the example of Him who "taught daily in the Temple," or of the multitudes who flocked to hear Him—whether our scant week-day attendances would not be shamed by the numbers who went in with Peter and John into the Temple, at the hour of prayer—we can judge for ourselves. The point of the appeal made to us is as to *trustee* Christians—trustees for God, and for the souls of men. I am not allowing that our own souls will not profit by such attendances also. It is certain they will, if such profit be sought. The Lord is in the sanctuary, as He is not anywhere else. He is there by promise, by token, by covenant, by whispers inaudible of spirit to spirit, and heart to heart, and soul to soul:—"Wherever two or three are gathered together in My name there am I in the midst of them." Still we should unduly limit the benefit of week-day services if we did not extend the benefit of them "to them that are without"—the prayers that go up for *them*, and the effect that such services have upon the religious life of the

nation at large. I know of nothing which, more than well-attended week-day services, proclaims the realness of our Christianity; the realness of it, that is, as a religion which mingles with, and leavens, and hallows the work of every-day life. In the sanctuary, the Apostle teaches, we both do good and get good:—"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more as ye see the day approaching."*

VI. The last point of view, from which the subject of the present lecture requires us to contemplate the Christian, is in his relation to the *sacraments* of the Church, especially the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

And, here, with regard to the number of professing Christians who *do* partake of that holy ordinance, compared with those who do *not*, we are brought face to face with one of the strangest anomalies of our practical Christianity. Viewed in the light of religious consistency, the fewness in the number of communicants, when taken in the aggregate, must be a marvel to the world, to angels, and to men. Is it possible that men can

* Heb. x. 25

have realised the awful dignity of this great sacrament, the solemn circumstances of its institution, the avowed design of its appointment, and, above all, the emphatic declaration of the Master that, on a faithful and continuous observance of this holy mystery depends the life of our soul; and yet that so many live in the neglect of it all their life long? or, if they do not neglect it altogether, receive it only at the most widely-separated intervals—after the fashion of some quarterly roll-call—or, perhaps, as an annual tribute of respect to the Church which first gave them their Christian name?

Neither can we have failed to notice another phase of this inconsistency among Christians, one which, though observable in other acts of worship, is most conspicuous in this its highest form, namely, the large excess of *female* communicants over those of the other sex. Why is this? whence have people derived the notion of this two-faced Christianity? of a gospel for *women*, not being a gospel for *men*? of a sacrament, quite needful for the saving of a woman's soul, but not needful for the saving of the man's? Yet the apparent holding of such a view stares us in the face every Sunday in the year. As the

rail for Holy Communion fills up, one tithe of those who draw nigh will be found to consist of fathers, husbands, and brothers; but of the rest of the sex, though, as Christians, calling themselves "cleansed," none return to give glory to God, or to thank the Physician of souls for their cure. Surely, we may ask, "Were there not ten cleansed, but where are the nine?"

Where? Some will make answer in one way, and some in another. We close with a few words to persons of one class only—namely, those whose reluctance to partake of the Lord's Supper proceeds from a mistaken tenderness of conscience. They would come, if they could feel they might come. But they hesitate, honestly hesitate. They make out their spiritual state to be worse than it is. They mistake little grace for no grace; weak faith for the total want of faith: the absence of all sensible joy and comfort in religious exercises, for a proof that they do not love Christ, and that Christ does not love them. And therefore they do not come. But Christ says "Come," and surely it were better that we should take the Holy One at His word. Let us not wait for the disburdening of cares and sorrows, nor for the removal of apprehensions and fears. Rather should

we bring all these with us—a sacrifice to be consumed upon the altar, a burden to be cast into the lap of God. All we want is Christ—Christ upon His own terms, Christ upon any terms. And here, in Holy Communion, He offers Himself to us. Our fears and burdens are not our hindrance, but our plea; not our disqualification for coming, but the reason of all others why we should come—"Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

LECTURE II.

THE CHRISTIAN IN SOCIETY.

“Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.”—ROM. xv. 2.

THE principle laid down in the last lecture, as lying at the foundation of a man's relations to the CHURCH, applies with equal force to the duties which he owes to *society*, to the *world*, and to those of his own *household*, namely, that “no man liveth to himself.” This law of the kingdom altereth not. A Christian man is God's special creation—an instrument designedly raised up for the furtherance of great purposes. We cannot suppose him isolated from the great aggregate of providential agencies, without interfering with the working of a pre-ordained plan—disturbing, in fact, the moral machinery of the world. Every responsible agent is a factor in bringing about the results of Divine government. His life, his actions, his opinions, his daily behaviour and deportment—all these are gathered up into a system of beneficent causations, which would be thrown out of order, if any one of

us might claim the right to dwell apart; if, ignoring the duty of moral stewardship, and of influencing others for their good, we were content to urge in excuse that plea of unutterable selfishness, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

The Apostle would not allow his Roman converts to lose sight of this social responsibility, in relation to the matter on which he had been consulted. Disputes had sprung up in the Church about the obligation to observe meats and days. The only way to heal these disputes, the Apostle teaches, is that, while each should be satisfied of the rightness of his own views, he should be quite prepared to believe in the moral sincerity of those who differ from him. If each be "fully persuaded in his own mind," "he that regardeth the day regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it."* All this pointed to a large-hearted charity, in judging one of another. Neither in matters of faith or practice, can we expect all men to think exactly alike. Of course, we hold fast by the rule, "*In necessariis unitas, in dubiis libertas, in omnibus charitas*;" and, therefore, anything of condemnation or fault-finding, where no great

* Rom. xiv. 6.

principle is at stake, it is a Christian's duty to avoid. Still, there is a practical limit to these Gospel concessions. The "peaceable" must not be followed after, at the expense of that which is "pure," neither must the desire to please a *neighbour*, be pleaded in excuse for a course of conduct which we fear may not please God. That which God desires for our neighbour, we know, is whatever may conduce to his spiritual and eternal happiness; and therefore, please or displease, our first care must be to consider what will promote *that*.

I. Some profitable applications of the rule here laid down may be deduced, if we consider the circumstances of those to whom it was addressed.

The converts to whom the Apostle wrote were dwellers in the midst of, if not themselves reclaimed from, idolatry of the most debasing kind. They were obliged to be daily spectators of the unfruitful works of darkness, as well as to have constant intercourse with those who were the enemies of the Cross of Christ—enemies of God and of all goodness. They must be careful, therefore, to order their conversation with all wisdom and prudence: not giving offence, and not taking offence needlessly; but always remembering that

there were a good many eyes upon them, keen to find out their faults, and ready to take advantage of their mistakes. And these precautions were the more necessary in their case, because Christianity was not with them, as it is with us, professedly at least, the religion of the many—of the court, the camp, and all high places. On the contrary, with them the whole current of national feeling set the other way. In nearly all the cities of the empire, idolatry was associated with every thing that was graceful, and high-bred, and attractive. The art, the science, the taste, the literature of the country were all enlisted on its side, so that the Christian was not only a marked man, but a despised and vulgar man.* Hence the part he had to sustain was one of no common difficulty. He had to live down a most deeply-rooted prejudice. He must be careful not unnecessarily to irritate, or disgust, or injudiciously obtrude his Christianity upon men. And yet, on the other hand, he must see to it that expediency was never allowed to degenerate into a compromise of principle, or that, in trying “to please men,”

* See the account given in Tacitus (*Hist.*, bk. v.) of the Jews, of whom the Romans supposed the Christians to be a sect.

he allowed himself to forget that he was "a servant of God." Thus, to be firm, without being harsh; to be faithful, without being rude; to be courteous, without dissembling before men; to be liberal and charitable in his judgment of the religion of others, with a steady and unswerving loyalty to the truth of God—these were the lessons of practical prudence which these Roman Christians had to learn. To wish to please is a natural thing to most of us, and, within limits, it is a permissible thing. But "even Christ pleased not Himself," says the Apostle: neither must we do so, if thereby we do other people harm—"Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification."

And the counsel is for Christians now. The times may have changed since the Apostle wrote, but human nature has not changed, and, on the part of the many, it is to be feared the dislike to a high-toned spiritual Christianity has not changed. To the CHRISTIAN IN SOCIETY there is the same need of watchfulness there has ever been. There is the same danger, in himself, of yielding and adapting himself to a feeble, conventional, impoverished type of godliness; the same keen desire in men of the world to hunt out and expose

a Christian's inconsistencies; the same need for using much tact and judgment in combating both error and evil; and the same proneness to take offence by those of the contrary part, even when we are seeking to do them good. What is the right moral attitude for the Christian to assume under such conditions of society?

Manifestly, it should be one of great *caution and circumspection*. One or two scriptures seem to point very plainly to this. Writing to the Ephesians, the Apostle says, "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise;"* and again, to the Colossians, "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without;"†—to which may be added the direction to the disciples, given by our Lord Himself, "Be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves."

All these counsels are in harmony with that part of our text which says, "Let every man please his neighbour." They seem to say to us, Do not offend people without a cause. Do not enter upon a crusade against their harmless usages, though to you they may not seem very wise. But comply with received customs as long as you can, and as far as you can. Especially are we to

* Eph. v. 15.

† Col. iv. 5.

remember that religion has no war with the refinements, the amenities, the graceful courtesies of life. It asks only to be allowed to shed over them some of its own hallowing influences, and to bind them all together in that "charity which is the bond of perfectness." Indeed, anything like churlishness, intended harshness or asperity, is opposed to the entire spirit of Christianity. A truly religious man must show himself kindly towards every one. It is a part of his religion, as much as his prayers are. None are without the pale of his courtesy, however uncouth or disagreeable they may be. Warmed as his heart is with beams from the Sun of Righteousness, it reflects these beams back on all mankind—shining on the just and on the unjust, and showing kindness to the evil and to the good.

II. So much for the first clause of the text. But how about the other? "Let every man please his neighbour for *his good to edification*."

Here we bring in a limit—and a limit of precedence too. For, according to this rule, the "edification" of our neighbour is to be the first thing—or at least that which is most important; the "pleasing" of him is the second thing, or that which is expedient and desirable.

If the things clash, this social canon of the Apostle prescribes for us *which* of the two will have to give way. We must consider what will tend to "edify," before we lay ourselves out to "please." Thus, we know it is not to our neighbour's "edification," that we appear to acquiesce in his sneers against the strait-lacedness of evangelical religion; or that we tolerate with indifference, if not with a seemingly approving silence, remarks which we know are designed to "make a mock at sin." It is not to his "edification," that we extenuate or speak lightly of faults, for which we know he is to be blamed, or that we gloss over offences against the holy law of God, by calling them by some mild and softened name. "Please" him, by such a course of conduct, we may, but "edify" him we certainly shall not. And a day may come when he shall reproach us, not more for our cowardice than for our unkindness; not more for our disloyalty to the Gospel of Christ, than for our unfaithfulness to a friend.

It is the part of a Christian in SOCIETY, therefore, to exercise himself to have "a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men."* He

* Acts xxiv. 16.

is not required to go about in quest of evil practices or evil men; but he *is* required boldly to rebuke sin, if it comes in his way. No doubt, the administering of rebukes is among the most difficult and delicate of our social responsibilities. But occasions may arise when the right line of conduct, for a Christian man, is plain enough. Thus, if I am engaged in the duties of my calling where I *must* be, or in the ordinary intercourse of society, where I have a *right* to be, and I hear a man having recourse to a profane or blasphemous expression; or alluding to vicious practices in terms of jocose and ill-disguised approval; or casting a sneer of ridicule, as ill-natured as it is ill-bred, against the scruples of another man's conscience—the alternative of protest or silence is no option with me. The Apostle's language is imperative: "Them that sin, rebuke before all that others also may fear."*

III. But the expression, "please his neighbour for his good to edification," suggests another view of the Christian, in his relations to SOCIETY—namely, how he may best turn his intercourse with those around him to the direct benefit of their souls.

* 1 Tim. v. 20.

It is here that our Lord's exhortation to cultivate the wisdom of "the serpent," or that of the Apostle to "walk in wisdom toward them that are without," must be carefully borne in mind. A Christian who seeks his neighbour's edification—in other words, who is desirous to win souls for Christ—will find he is undertaking a duty which, binding as it is upon all of us, will task all his powers of judgment and discrimination. For, in the fulfilment of it, we have characters to study, seasons to choose, different temperaments to allow for, and, in each individual case, all the specialities of age, and circumstance, and early associations to bear in mind, before we can determine, either when to be silent or when to speak. And even when the time and occasion are resolved upon, no less of practical discernment will be required of us in selecting the particular aspects of Christian truth we should begin with, when we are desirous to win over to the faith of Christ one who is as yet without any serious thoughts. For, otherwise, we may do more harm than good. To begin by using the hackneyed phrases of a religious school, with men of high culture and intelligence; or to press the obligations of a ripened and mature Christianity

on one who is only just "setting out towards Zion with his face thitherwards;" to begin with a strictly moral and upright man, by setting forth the terrors of eternal judgment; or to enlarge, in speaking to the vicious man, on the Christian's joy, and hope, and peace in believing; to try to get a hearing for serious subjects, while men are listening to the sounds of mirth and revelry; or, in the presence of his ungodly associates, to try to convince a man of his folly and his sin:—all these are great mistakes; not only useless, but likely to be hurtful to the cause we desire to serve.*

We may not, in these matters of promoting a neighbour's edification, rely for success upon a pure and benevolent intention. "The only wise God" will have us use wisdom. And the perfection of wisdom, in these cases, consists in adaptation—adaptation to the character, bias, and circumstances of those whom it is our heart's desire and prayer that we may be able to benefit. None had that desire more fervently than the Apostle. Yet, in trying to give effect to it, he was never unmindful of his own rules. He studied to "please" his neighbour always, yet always with a view to his

* It is manifestly unfair to plead, in excuse for such ill-timed forms of zeal, the *ἐγκαλῶς ἀκαλῶς* of 2 Tim. iv. 2.

good to "edification." He would be a Jew to the Jew, if that would give him any influence over the Jew. He would be a Nazarite to those who were under vows, rather than offend a Nazarite. He was willing to be made "all things to all men that he might by all means save some."

Such are a few practical hints for the guidance of the CHRISTIAN IN SOCIETY. It is an aspect of Christian life which we find largely provided for in Scripture. Especially will wise counsels in respect to it be found in the Proverbs of Solomon. These brief sentences are master-pieces of Christian tact; models of religious common sense; rules, constructed with the most consummate art, to show to us how we may avoid offending our neighbour, while scrupulously observant of all means for doing him good.

A yet closer model for our following, in this respect, will be found in the example of our Divine Master. In winning souls, He ever chose the fittest means to reach His ends; took advantage of the most apt occasions to utter "the word in season." He caught friends with a holy and loving guile, while He took His enemies "in their own craftiness." For wrath, He had a soft

answer; for hypocrisy, He had a denouncing woe; for disciples' faults, He had a stern rebuke; for adversaries, and all who evil entreated Him, He had nothing but the prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And we are in the world, even as He was in the world. Society has its claims upon *us*, even as He allowed it to have its claims upon Him. After His all-perfect example, therefore, we must try to act towards every man a neighbour's part—"edifying" him as much as we may, "pleasing" him as far as we can; but still never forgetting that God has made us *trustees* for his good. And, as trustees, our duties are defined—the deed under which we act, having carefully tied up every kindness shown to another, every charity, every courtesy, every amiable and well-meant compliance, with this unalterable condition—"Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification."

LECTURE III.

THE CHRISTIAN IN BUSINESS.

“In all labour there is profit.”—PROV. xiv. 23.

FROM the Christian in SOCIETY, we pass to the Christian in BUSINESS, the Christian in his daily employment, the Christian in the work and struggle of common life. Labour is an ordinance of God ; and for fallen creatures, such as we are, it is a very merciful ordinance. No doubt the first father of our race deemed it one of the heaviest parts of his Paradise sentence, that henceforth he should have to live by the sweat of his brow. But there was an underlying alleviation of that part of the sentence which, at the time, he knew not of. It was that contained in the words of the wise man in our text—“In all labour there is profit.”

Let us proceed to consider the principle here laid down, as well as some limitations with which it must necessarily be understood.

I. And, first, as to the PRINCIPLE itself, that

there is a real profit in labour; that stated employment is good for a man. No matter what form the employment takes, whether it be in providing work for the toiling hand, or thought for the toiling brain, the wise man's rule holds true, that it had been a bad thing for man, after the fall, to have been left with nothing to do. Granted that the labour sentence of Paradise was intended to have something of a penal character about it, yet we may believe also that it was intended as a wise provision against man doing himself further harm. While man continued innocent, the earth brought forth fruit of herself. Rivers watered the garden, and rain fell upon it. Man's task to dress and keep it was but as a grateful recreation, filling up his intervals of worship, by gathering materials for his next song of praise. What if there had been this unforced and toilless yielding of earth's good things, after man had fallen, after the affections had become turned away from God, and the heart was lusting after evil things? Would not the continual springing up of the fruits of the earth, without an effort or care on his part, have laid him open to all the suggestions of sloth until, in the very fulness of God's gifts, he would have found a temptation to indulge in every evil

and corrupt desire? Oh! murmur we not at the blight, and the nipping frost, and the dark cloud, as they keep back the fruits of the earth. The traces of the fall are on all of these. They tell of the need, the merciful need there is of man's toil; and teach us that to us, as children of the transgressors, there is more of blessing than of curse in that sentence—"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread."*

And in many ways does the wisdom of this appointment of labour show itself. Continual employment keeps the soul from much that is sinful. If we could reckon up the temptations that have assaulted us in life, we should find that, for the most part, they have come upon us in times of idleness; when, there being no pressing call upon our hands or thoughts, the mind was allowed to run riot in foolish imaginations, giving licence to its schemes of evil, and fancying how easy it would be to do this wrong thing, or that. Perhaps, like David, we have tarried idly at home, leaving others to do our work;† not seeing that we thereby placed ourselves at Satan's disposal, to be employed in some evil work for *him*. Thus constant and even laborious employment is often

* Gen. iii. 19.

† 2 Sam. xi. 1.

a man's best security against the evil, both of the world and of his own heart. He has no time to meditate upon half the mischiefs, and schemes, and inviting facilities for evil which throng upon the inactive or vacant mind. He cannot, with the idle retailer of newspaper personalities, throw himself with keen zest into all the scandals and follies of the day, subjecting all the miserable details to the test of his microscopic scrutiny. He cannot, with the tattler and the busybody, go wandering from house to house, his mind filled up to the brim with slanderous reports, mischief-making hearsays, accounts of misfortunes soon to be expected to befall this neighbour, and surmised reasons for the step which has been taken by that. No ; the demands of active duty are upon him. He must leave the idle to amuse the idle, and the dead to bury their dead.

We subscribe willingly therefore to that sentiment of the wise man that "in all labour there is profit." Active engagements—so they do not engross, and absorb, and draw into them the higher affections of the soul—will be found beneficial to every one of us. They give a healthy tone to the mind. They strengthen the moral energy of the will. They prevent a good deal of

that listlessness and instability, and utter feebleness of character, so often found in those who, having no stated occupation, and having nothing to compel prompt action, will do and undo, resolve and alter their resolve—a continual prey to the first ascendant influence, and the sport of every wind that blows. Even good men are often glad to be obliged to work, and have found the profit of labour, as a refuge from the worries and vexations of life. Something has soured or fretted them. A grievous wrong has been done to them in business, or an ungrateful requital has been made for a deed of kindness, an indignity has touched their pride, or unkind things have been breathed against their good name; and an interval must elapse before they can know the full extent of the evil done to them. How shall they best employ it? Why, next to casting the care where we are taught to cast all cares, there is no relief like hard, resolute, thought-engrossing work. With idleness to encourage our irritation, with nothing to do but to sit still, and hear Satan make the most of our troubles, and the worst of them, we should soon get to think ourselves the most ill-used people in the world—champing the iron bit of rebellion, and murmuring, in secret, both against

God and man. Nay, even in deep grief, when the hand of the Lord has touched us, when the shadow of a great sorrow lies upon us, and we almost love its gloom, how merciful is the appointment which tears us from our idol grief by compulsory occupation; which bids us, instead of lying longer on our faces, to rise to the immediate duties of life, resolving, in the darkness, and through the darkness, to do whatever our hand findeth to do.

It is an indispensable aspect of the life of godliness, therefore, that we consider the Christian in BUSINESS. Any precepts, given to him for a higher service, for the rendering of what is due to God and his own soul, must meet him on the low platform of his earthly necessities; must allow of his doing service to the Most High, not only, or even chiefly, after the prescribed rules of an external worship, but amidst the duties of his calling, and whilst his hands are still rough with the hard work of every-day life. A Christian has a stake in both worlds, and it is for his happiness that he should work for both:—"In all labour there is profit."

II. But let us consider some important LIMITATIONS with which this declaration of the wise man

is to be accepted: as that it must be *necessary* labour, and not for greed; *moderate* labour, and not trenching upon religious duties; *honest* labour, and not contravening the great principles of truth and equity.

i. First, then, when it is said, "In all labour there is profit," the language must be understood of labour directed to the ends of our daily livelihood, and *not to covetousness*. For Holy Scripture, as we know, has no language too strong for denouncing this last sin—"the covetous whom the Lord abhorreth";* "covetousness which is idolatry."† It never alludes to those who are given to it without classing them with the worst company—with the blasphemer, with the liar, with the unclean, with the apostate,‡ summing up all with the declaration that "the love of money is the root of all evil."§ There is no doubt about the Christian in business, especially if very successful, being liable to be drawn into this snare. He that hasteth to be rich, says Solomon, "hath an evil eye," "he shall not be innocent."|| No; for in the use of this evil eye, his one desire is to scrape riches together; he is determined not to

* Ps. x. 3. † Col. iii. 5. ‡ 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.

§ 1 Tim. vi. 10. || Prov. xxviii. 20.

throw away an opportunity; treading as closely as possible on the confines of commercial morality, and subjecting health, recreation, mental improvement, and domestic comfort to the dictates of a close-handed and parsimonious thrift. No plea of necessity is pretended, as if the man were afraid of some overtaking disaster. No urgent family demands are coming upon him, for which, by all the laws of prudence, he is bound to provide. But still, from day to day, and for the best hours of every day, his one occupation and aim is grasp, grasp, grasp;—being made miserable if a gainful contract has slipped through his hands, and thinking himself half wronged when the example of some liberal neighbour compels him to subscribe more largely than he would otherwise have done to the support of good works.

Of course it is difficult to draw any practical line in such matters. There is a moderate improvement of providential opportunities, which is not "covetousness." There is a reasonable forecasting for a day of necessity, which is not "hoarding." There is a prudent forethought for those who are to come after, which it would be unjust to brand as a mere lust of filthy lucre. "Every man must be fully persuaded in his own mind."

“On the bells of the horses,” and on the lids of his money-coffers, let there be written these words of the Apostle, “They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.”* John Bunyan well illustrates the danger. He says, “There were four professed pilgrims named Hold-the-world, Money-love, Save-all, and By-ends, who would leave the road to go and look at a silver-mine in a little hill called Lucre. But whether they fell into the pit by looking over the brink itself, or whether they went down to dig, and were smothered by the damps that commonly arise,—of these things I am not certain. But this I observed, they never were seen in the way again.” What profit had they of their labour?

ii. Again, in order to a Christian having any real profit of his labour, it must be *moderate labour*,—that is, labour subordinated to the ends of a higher life.

Remember the words of the prophet, “Why spend ye money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?”† and, again, those words of our Lord, “Labour not for

* 1 Tim. vi. 9.

† Isa. lv. 2.

the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth to everlasting life.”* Now, as intimated already, there is no reason why these two kinds of labour should not go on together. And examples are not wanting of men, the busiest and most active in the duties of their worldly calling, and, at the same time, men eminent for their proficiency in all that pertains to a godly life. Not far should we have to go back, even in our own day, for instances of statesmen, warriors, judges, scholars, affording practical proof how possible it is for the saintly life to hold its own against the hard-working life; how the strifes of men and the peace of the heart; the din of arms and the uplifted prayer; the keen contests of the forum or the senate, and the quiet hour of communion with God, could all go on together, and yet the soul take no hurt—the fire burning in the midst of the bush, and yet not a leaf consumed.

But it is not so always, and it is one of the trials of the Christian in BUSINESS to keep his duties to the present and the future world from clashing; to keep the one from encroaching on the proper domain of the other; in other words, to see to it that, while rendering “to

* John vi. 27.

Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, he renders to God the things that are God's." We live in an age of keen competitions. In all the departments of mercantile and professional life, men are jostling one another, and outbidding one another for the highest rewards and prizes. Like as it was said, on one occasion, of our Lord's disciples, there is so much "coming and going" that men find they have hardly "leisure so much as to eat."* Is it a thing to be wondered at, to find that they have still less leisure to read, and to commune with their own hearts, and to pray?

We put it down, then, as among the besetting dangers of the Christian in business that, in the midst of over-much occupation, there should supervene, unconsciously perhaps, a lowered and impaired standard of devotional practice; a growing distaste for the exercises of godliness; a gradual absorption and taking up by the concerns of this world of all that energy, and freshness, and spiritual power, which are needful to keep, in a healthy state, the life of God in the soul of man. No man who, as the Apostle expresses it, "minds earthly things,"† can, in the higher sense, ever be a man of prayer. He has not

* Mark vi. 31.

† Phil. iii. 19.

time for it, has not heart for it, has not patience for it. He is engaged in a race. Every moment he is giving to God in his closet, in the morning, he is thinking how much he is losing ; how many competitors, not troubled with his religious scruples, may be passing him by ; how, if he tarry too long in his meditations, or over his Bible, or for family prayers, he must lay his account with lost ground. In the evening, it is still worse with him. He is fresh from the scene of disquietude, and harass, and worry. His mind is on the rack. Failures, mistakes, disappointments, miscalculated chances—all these fret and torment his spirit, “like as it were a moth fretting a garment.” He feels that, in such a state, prayer would be a mockery. And Satan tells him it would be so too. And it is much if the soul does not capitulate upon such a plea, consenting to close, in broken and unblest slumbers, eyes which may never open upon the light again. Oh ! again is the question to be asked, “What profit hath a man of all the labour that he taketh under the sun ?” careful and cumbered about “many things,” but the “one thing needful” unsecured ? Work, steady work—aye, work even for this world’s prizes—heaven forbids not, so only that regard be had to the

fixed law of its own subordination, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."*

iii. There is one other aspect of our subject, painful to touch upon, but hardly to be passed over in a chapter professing to deal with the "Christian in business," and therewith in his relations to any marked aspects of the national commerce. In saying that "in all labour there is profit," we are sure that the wise man meant to restrict his words to labour which is ordered in all things according to the *strictest rules of moral integrity and uprightness*.

Very stern are the denunciations of Holy Scripture against those who should violate these rules. Let one text suffice—that in which the Apostle gives this solemn caution: "See that no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified."† And this Almighty Avenger is no respecter of persons. If, in the case of the petty trader, it is declared "a false balance is abomination to the Lord,"‡ not less is it an abomination to

* Matt. vi. 33. † 1 Thess. iv. 6. ‡ Prov. xi. 1.

Him, when the merchant-prince makes a gain out of the credulous and unwary : when men of reputed standing for religiousness and honour, lend their names to a falsified balance-sheet, just that they may get hold of the pittance of the widow and the orphan, in order to bolster up a tottering and insolvent scheme.

Neither can we exclude from the same category of unrighteous dealing, things, which every recurring commercial panic brings to light—such as instances of men trading beyond their capital, if not without capital ; gaining a fictitious credit by means of worthless money-paper ; incurring liabilities which it must be on the chance of a die that they should be able to meet ;—in fact, turning the whole commerce of the country into a game of hazard, whilst honest men are left to bear all the risk.

Against such things, quite as much as against the lowest forms of shopkeeping dishonesty—the deceitful weights, the extortionate overcharge, the passing off of defective and blemished wares, the cunning advantage taken of the ignorant and inexperienced—the face of the Most High God is set as a flint. “The righteous Lord loveth righteousness : but the ungodly and him

that delighteth in wickedness doth His soul abhor." *

From the view we have taken of the "Christian in business," it will be seen that work, as such, presents no barrier to proficiency in spiritual life, but is rather a field in which the graces of Christian character are to be exercised and shown forth. "These are in the world," our Lord said, speaking of his disciples. They are placed there to labour, to do good, to set holy examples, to endure a hard lot, to show how the severe and most engrossing duties of our providential station may be made to us a discipline and a training for the restful work of heaven. We sometimes repine at the hard work of life; and think if the demands upon our time were less urgent and absorbing, we could serve God better, and love him more. But in all this we err. There is a true worship of God in the world—a real religion in the right exercise of our daily calling. The altar may be set up side by side with the plough and loom; and, in reversal of that practice of the money-changers, we may turn the house of merchandise into a house of prayer.

Wherefore, "What God hath joined together

* Ps. xi. 6.

let not man put asunder." Toil and rest—labours and prayers—work in the world, and separation from the world, are alike God's ordinances. And making, though they do, one common oblation, yet each must be nourished from its own source, and each must have set apart to it its own time. The world will not do the work of the closet, and the closet will not do the work of the world. Neglect either, and we destroy both. Cultivate both, and in both we shall have our reward. For in all our worldly labours we shall have profit, and in all our spiritual exercises we shall have joy, hope, and peace.

LECTURE IV.

THE CHRISTIAN IN MARRIED LIFE.

PART I.—HUSBANDS.

“As being heirs together of the grace of life.”—
1 PETER, iii. 7.

ALL those that are married, or that intend to take the holy estate of matrimony upon them, will do well to mark this short sentence of one “who was himself a married man.” Other counsels does the Apostle give pertaining to the married state—solemn, weighty, very practical counsels. And the grace with which “women, professing godliness,” should adorn themselves, and the deportment which is to be looked for in a Christian husband,—these are set down for us very carefully. But that which both husbands and wives should chiefly remember, and most often ponder, is that the end, for which they have been joined together, is that they may be “heirs together of the grace of life,” pilgrims together to a home in heaven.

I. In considering the subject of our present

lecture, *THE CHRISTIAN IN MARRIED LIFE*, it may be well to say a few words on the institution of marriage itself. It has some characteristics which mark it off from all other institutions of social life.

i. Of these we note, first, in the language of our Church, that matrimony is a HOLY estate. This was its distinguishing feature at the beginning. The first pair were sanctified, and joined together in marriage by God Himself. And the stamp of holiness has been fixed upon the rite ever since. Even among heathen nations, the institution has never lost its traditional sanctity. The records remain which tell us how they always prepared for the marriage engagement by special prayer, and then solemnised it with the offering up of sacrifices; whilst, in the first ages of the Christian Church, a marriage which had not been sanctified by prayers and oblations, was not considered to be even lawful. And this verdict has been ratified by the Church in all ages. It has ever looked upon the estate as Divine in its institution, hallowed in its symbolic significance, purifying in its design and end. Marriage was in the world before sin was. It was instituted of God "in the time of man's innocency;" when all his thoughts were just, and all his joys were pure; when his peace

flowed like a river, and his righteousness as the waves of the sea ; when one thing only was wanted to perfect his happiness—a kindred soul to commune with, and a partner to share his joys. And all the Scripture references to the institution teach the same thing. Does the Almighty wish to show the tenderness of His love for an afflicted and widowed Church ? It is declared “ Fear not, thy Maker is thine Husband.”* Would the Lord Jesus uphold the sacredness of the institution to the end of time ? He adorns and beautifies it “ with His presence, and first miracle which He wrought in Cana of Galilee.”† No purer emblem can the Divine Spirit select to signify to us the mystical union that is betwixt Christ and His Church ; and the most perfect type of that Church, in her final glory, is that of a “ holy city, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”‡

With such testimonies in favour of marriage sacredness, we can afford to set lightly by that piece of comparatively modern legislation, which, on the assumption of matrimony being merely a “ civil contract,” divested it of all necessary religious accompaniments, and even admitted of its

* Isa. liv. 5.

† John ii. 2.

‡ Rev. xxi. 2.

performance before a civil magistrate. Pagan Rome at one period did the same, and the consequence was a rapid multiplying of divorces among her citizens, and the degradation of some of her noblest daughters. The same thing might have happened among us, if the good sense and religious feeling of our people had not practically wiped out this heathenish stain from our statute book—Christians, of all denominations, setting their face against the secularising of such a hallowed thing, and insisting upon retaining, as an everlasting motto for the marriage ring, “Holiness unto the Lord.”

ii. But secondly, in speaking of the characteristics of the estate of matrimony, we should insist upon it as an *honourable* estate—that is, not only is it holy when entered into, but it is commended of God as worthy to be entered into.

“Marriage is honourable in all,” says the Apostle.* Only let its vows be inviolate, and its obligations fulfilled with all loyalty, and, whatever a man’s state or calling, the institution is honoured, approved, right, and acceptable before God. The Church of Rome may deny it to her ecclesiastics, and may plead the example, and some of the words, of the

* Heb. xiii. 4.

Apostle, as her authority for so doing. But that 7th chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, which is commonly cited as favourable to celibacy, in order to a higher state of Christian life, will not, if carefully studied, afford any countenance to such a view. For, besides the qualifying expressions with which the Apostle accompanied his remarks upon this subject, such as, “*I suppose that this is good,*” “*I think I have the spirit of God,*” it is obvious that, so far as his remarks have any bearing adverse to holy matrimony at all, they are made with a special limitation to the peculiar exigencies of the times. “*I suppose therefore that this (that is, a single life) is good for the present distress.*” * As if he had said, In the present distracted condition of the Church ; in the general insecurity of Christian property in these persecuting times ; and in the necessary effect of increased domestic anxieties, under such circumstances, to hinder us in “attending upon the Lord without distraction,” † I could well wish that you were loosed from these lawful ties, and would say that “it is good for a man so to be.” This is the most that can be made of the Apostle’s language. It goes to allow that there

* 1 Cor. vii. 26.

† 1 Cor. vii. 35.

may be prudential considerations, which, in the case of some, might make marriage inexpedient; and that, in the case of others, there may be personal tastes and habits which may make it undesired and uncared for; but it is handling the Word of God deceitfully, to represent the Apostle as recommending the single state as one of "the counsels of perfection," or as holding in low esteem an ordinance, hallowed from the beginning as the choicest gift of God.

II. But the practical ends it is sought to keep in view, in these lectures, would not be answered, if we were not to offer some observations on what the Holy Scripture doth say "as touching the duty of husbands towards their wives and wives towards their husbands."

i. Now, in regard to the duties of HUSBANDS towards their wives, the Church evidently considers they are well summarised in that 5th chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians: "Husbands love your wives even as Christ also loved the Church." And again: "No man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church."* Here is not only a direc-

* Eph. v. 29.

tion given, but a measure and pattern according to which it is to be carried out—namely, the love of Christ to His Church. What are the characteristic marks of this love? They are sympathy, tenderness, all-forbearing patience.

Sympathy, we may observe, was a deep note of Christ's love to His Church. He took her infirmities. He bore her sicknesses. He was afflicted in all her afflictions. He had compassion on the multitudes when He saw them "scattered as sheep having no shepherd;"* and He wrought for them one of the greatest miracles, for fear they should "faint by the way."† The love of Christ to His Church, then, was a tender love; and such should that of husbands be. It should be framed on a knowledge of the gentleness of woman's nature—her sensitiveness to slight; her impatience of neglect; her loving appreciation of a husband's approval, as if, among earthly things, she lived for nothing else. And, therefore, in times of weakness, or moments of depression, or even under the thousand nameless disquietudes of domestic life, she ought to have *one* friend on whose sympathy she can always rely. She has contentedly shut herself out from all,

* Matt. ix. 36.

† Matt. xv. 32.

except one. For father and mother have been left. Brother and sister are afar off. Yet all are given up cheerfully, if she knows there is one heart which warms with tenderness towards her—a heart to weep with her weepings, and a heart to return her love.

Let there be no lack of affectionate sympathy, then, towards your wives. If their distress appear sometimes disproportioned to the occasion, remember that this susceptibility to grief, and fear, and strong emotion, is one of those marked attributes of a woman's nature, which a considerate husband should learn not to bear with only, but to esteem. What a beautiful pattern to husbands is Elkanah in this respect? The grief of Hannah, extenuate it as we may, must be considered as not unreasonable only, but sinful. Yet he does not chide her for her fault. His only thought is how he can comfort her. "Why weepest thou?" he says to her; "why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? Am not I better to thee than ten sons?"*

ii. Especially will this patient and forbearing spirit in a husband be seen in his manner of exercising *authority*. The necessity of an ultimate authority in a household is the dictate of reason;

* 1 Sam. i. 8.

and Scripture has laid down for us plainly in whom it should reside : “ The husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church.”* But while this rule of the husband is unquestioned, while it is one which every good wife will respect and uphold, yet too much care cannot be taken, by the Christian husband, that it should be the rule of reason, and love, and moderation, and kindness, as opposed to anything of magisterial harshness, or self-asserting caprice. “ Your wives are subject to you,” says Archbishop Leighton, “ but you likewise are subject to the Word,” and if you take heed to that Word, you will ever be mindful of that precept—“ Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.”†

A husband, therefore, who desires to exercise and maintain his proper influence over a wife will never allow it to be arbitrarily or unkindly used. He will rule only by affection, and lead only by silken cords,—thus drawing their united wills into such harmonious and sweet concurrence, that none can tell where subjection commences, or where dominion ends. Especially will this forbearing use of his authority be seen in the gentleness of

* Eph. v. 23.

† Col. iii. 19.

his remonstrances, should occasion call for them ; in his kind consideration for all inadvertences and failures ; in a watchful guarding against that harsh and exacting spirit, which, quite as much as downright cruelty, crushes the delicate spirit of woman's nature, and does violence to the sacredness of woman's love. If ever wife deserved sharp rebuke, it was Job's wife. Yet see how he replies to her wicked counsel—"Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"*

iii. Another characteristic of a husband's love, brought out in this passage of St. Peter, we may describe as "*respect*," or that which is due to a wife's feelings and position.

The whole passage runs:—"Ye husbands, dwell with your wives, according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel:" weaker, that is, as having a more delicately constituted moral nature ; as not able to bear the unfeeling indifference of the selfish, or the thoughtless incivilities of the rude. And this "giving honour" consists in the unabated attentions and courtesies of

* Job ii. 10.

the marriage state ; in the desire of the husband to testify, whether in company or at home, that genuine respect and esteem for a wife which is the foundation of all lasting attachment ; anticipating her wishes, thoughtful of her comforts, studious of everything which should minister to her health, or peace, or happiness. It is always the opening of a dark chapter in matrimonial life, when these little courtesies begin to be cast off. It tells of affection waning, of the foundations of esteem becoming loosened, of wedded love subsiding into a cold formality—a respectable thing, kept up for appearance before the world, but supplying no proof of the continuance of love or peace at home.

To all Christian husbands, then, we would say, with this married Apostle, “ Give honour unto the wife.” Respect her position. Let her authority be everywhere upheld. Let her wishes be consulted in any proposed alteration in your plans of life ; and, above all, let her scruples and feelings be deferred to on all points of conscience—on any matter respecting your duties to God or man. The characteristic of the female intellect is generally allowed to be a quick and clear perception. And seldom are its decisions more rapid or more accurate, than in nice and delicate dis-

criminations between the right and wrong of practical duty.

iv. But the scriptural type of a husband's love, that it be as that of Christ's love to his Church, requires that it be a *constant* and *undecaying* love—for it is written that Jesus "having loved His own which were in the world He loved them unto the end."*

The application of this to the Christian husband will be obvious. It counsels him to watch jealously in himself the first signs of declining tenderness, of cooled regards, of a growing interest in any pleasures that are not shared by the wife, a restless preference for anybody, or anything, which helps to take off from, what he never ought to have felt, the monotonous and insipid current of home life. For if it be insipid to the husband, think what it must be to her who is neglected for the sake of these selfish preferences. Unable, like him, to create for herself new sources of enjoyment; precluded by her womanly proprieties from seeking, at this scene or that, a substitute for the faded delights and lost companionships of home, she must resign herself to a condition of unsolaced loneliness—keeping company with her

* John xiii. 1.

own sad thoughts, or in the fruitless recallings of early married happiness, wearing her worse than widowed hours away. Oh! there are many objects of commiseration in this sorrowing world. But, saving always the unhappy victim of conjugal unfaithfulness, if there be one more than another for whom the heart should bleed, and the tongue should pray, and the sympathies of a manly and generous nature should be drawn forth, it is a *neglected wife!*

Reserving, for another lecture, some counsels more especially pertaining to the duties of Christian WIVES, together with some, bearing on obligations which husbands and wives must share in common, one concluding word may here be addressed to HUSBANDS. Let them remember that, in that fundamental canon for the ordering of married life, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church," a reason is added why He so loved it—namely, that He might "sanctify it"; that He might "present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish."* Husbands, realise if you can the awfulness of the responsibility here indicated.

* Eph. v. 27.

Consider what it supposes, and what it assumes—namely, that it is yours to influence, in large measure, the formation of a wife's religious character ; that God has given you an ascendancy over her to that very end ; and that when you shall appear side by side with her in the mighty congregation of the risen dead, the account will have to be given by you whether the scope of all your counsels, the tendency of all your domestic arrangements, the bias of your own life and example, the constant aim of all your wedded influence and love, were that the wife whom the Lord hath given you might be presented to Christ a member of that glorious Church which, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, shall constitute the bridal glory of the Lamb.

Yes, Christian husband, this, and nothing less than this, is your high and holy calling. It is to make your wife a partaker with you of the glory which shall be revealed. It is to turn her leaning and loving confidence in you to the account of a greater nearness to God, and your mutual preparedness for the life of heaven. It is to show her how, in the day of prosperity, to be joyful, and in the day of adversity to consider. It is to prevent domestic cares from cumbering her heart, and

to restrain domestic affections from running into idolatrous excess. It is to show her how to make, while you assist her in making, your home a church, your closet an altar, your life a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, and your whole body soul, and spirit a holy oblation unto the Lord, "as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered."

LECTURE V.

THE CHRISTIAN IN MARRIED LIFE.

PART II.—WIVES.

“As being heirs together of the grace of life.”—
1 PETER iii. 7.

It was no part of the original plan of these lectures to introduce a second discourse on the CHRISTIAN IN MARRIED LIFE. But holy matrimony is so sacred and divine a thing, and the duties pertaining to it, so rarely fall in with the ordinary course of pulpit ministrations, that it seemed due to the subject itself to give it a more extended consideration than was possible in one discourse. Marriage—marriage “in the Lord,”* that is, for of that only am I to be understood as speaking—marriage is the corner-stone of our social fabric, the strength and ornament of the Church, the salt and purifier of the world. It is the school of virtue and the nursery of saints. It is the sanctifier of love, the ripener of friendships, the bond which knits together in one all the ties of domestic

* 1 Cor. vii. 39.

for any other; and hence, in that group of apostolic counsels, with which the Church dismisses the bride from the altar, it will be observed, that the injunction to *love* her husband is not even mentioned. No; the salient point of danger in her married life is, throughout Scripture, assumed to be a want of *submission*, a disposition to fret and chafe against that sentence of marital subjection pronounced upon the first mother of our race—whether showing itself in a want of deference to the authority of her husband, or in a want of moral reverence and esteem for his personal character.

i. Actual *submission* on the part of the wife we know was part of the Paradise sentence: "Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee;"* while the words of St. Paul run, "Let the wives be in subjection to their own husbands in everything."† Now the enunciating of such a rule, however unqualifiedly, is not likely to indispose, and is not intended to indispose a husband from deferring to the judgment of a wife, in matters where he is conscious of her superiority to himself. Examples, we know, there are many, of a wife possessing much greater administrative

* Gen. iii. 16.

† Eph. v. 24.

capabilities than her husband—able to reason more accurately, like the wife of Manoah;* or to pacify an opponent more discreetly, like Abigail;† better fitted than the husband to grapple with the difficulties of life, and able to endure the shock of adverse fortune with more equanimity and fortitude of mind. And no sensible husband is ashamed to acknowledge his obligations to such qualities. But still any ascendancy, acquired by them, should be wielded by the wife only in private. In the presence of others, it should take the form of that wise and deferential suggestion, which, so far from its being any compromise of a husband's dignity to yield to, it would be the natural dictate of conjugal prudence to consult. No; a true woman knows her place in the domestic constitution, and loves it. She remembers that Holy Scripture has said, "I suffer not a woman to usurp authority over the man."‡ Rule him; in one sense, she may, but she never shows she rules. She rather—

"Charms by acceptance, by submission sways,
Yet has her humour most when she obeys." §

* Judges xiii. 23.

† 1 Sam. xxv. 18, 19.

‡ 1 Tim. ii. 12.

§ Cf. Lord Bacon's *imperat parendo* in speaking of the good wife.

But the question may naturally arise, to what extent this principle of wifely obedience is to be carried? In one of the Apostolic counsels, at all events, a limit is plainly contemplated: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is *fit in the Lord*."* In this passage we have plainly set forth the proper extent and measure of a wife's optional compliances. She may refuse to obey her husband, when, by compliance, she would disobey God; when married law presumes to set itself up in opposition to moral law; when the submission required of her is one to which conscience cannot consent, and which the plainest precepts of the word of God forbid. Sarah, a good pattern of obedience generally, once yielded to a command of Abraham, which, it is clear, would have been more honoured by the refusal.† Neither could any have charged the wife of Jeroboam with contumacy if she had declined to be a party to her husband's weak imposture.‡

But, short of this conflict between human and Divine obligations, a husband's authority has no easily-determined limit. Even in matters of religious practice, perilous as is the responsibility he incurs in such a use of his authority, it is quite

* Col. iii. 18. † Gen. xii. 13. ‡ 1 Kings xiv. 2.

competent to a husband to interfere in ways, gravely affecting a wife's spiritual happiness and comfort. He may debar her from religious privileges which she loves, or he may urge her to a part in recreations which she disapproves, or he may require her to give up, to uncongenial scenes or employments, hours which she would gladly have dedicated to the calm exercises of the closet, or to the improvement of her own soul in grace and godliness. Nor shall she be without her reward in such self-denying compliances. There is always the hope that such meek concessions to a husband's views, made at what he knows to be a great cost of personal feeling, may eventually bring him round to a better mind. "For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband?"* At all events, religion is honoured in her example, and he cannot fail to do homage to, even if he does not ultimately embrace, a service, which, while forbidding in a wife any plain compromise of her Christian principles, yet never suffers her to forget what is due to wedded allegiance and wedded love. "Ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands, that, if any obey not the word, they also may, without the word, be won by the conversation of

* 1 Cor. vii. 16.

the wives, while they behold your chaste conversation, coupled with fear.”*

ii. But among separate duties of the Christian wife, and constituting one element of her appointed submission, is that of *reverence* and *respect* for her husband. In these counsels of St. Peter, we find him, superadding to his precept of wifely subjection, “even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord;”† whilst more emphatically we have St. Paul saying, “Let the wife see that she reverence her husband.”‡

We see the feeling here inculcated upon the wife. It is that she have that high sense of moral admiration and esteem for a husband, which delights to magnify his virtues, which respects his judgments, affirms his decisions, keeps eyes and ears closed against all his lesser weaknesses, and would fain attribute his very faults to some noble infirmity. Happiness there will be none, if a wife have not a real *respect* for her husband. He, to whom she is united, may be no model of perfectness, in the world’s eyes, but he should, as nearly as circumstances will allow, appear to be so in hers. An intended compliment to the Roman matron, Cornelia, by calling her “the daughter of

* 1 Pet. iii. 1, 2. † Gen. xviii. 12. ‡ Eph. v. 33.

Scipio," was indignantly rejected by her, on the ground that she preferred to be addressed as "the wife of Gracchus." At all events, it is certain that wives are preparing the way rapidly for a feeling of contempt for their husband, when they once begin to think meanly of him—of his abilities, of his prudence, of his sense of moral rectitude and propriety. Michal looked out of the window, and saw David dancing before the ark. If she had been worthy of such a husband, veneration for his character would have taught her that he was not likely to do such a thing without a reason. But she was an irreverent wife. And having, moreover, no sympathy with the religious motives by which he was actuated, she despised him in her heart—a sin for which she was visited by the Divine displeasure, even till her dying day.*

But what, it will be said, if, like another who subsequently became David's wife, I be married to a man whom I cannot respect; a man, of whom I am obliged to say in all sadness, as that unfortunate wife said, "Nabal is his name and folly is with him."† The supposition will give rise to some self-reproaching thoughts, as to whether you prayed for Divine guidance and direction before

* 2 Sam. vi. 20—23.

† 1 Sam. xxv. 25.

you became united to such a person, but does not affect the question of present duty, which requires that you should honour the *husband*, when you find it hard to respect the *man*. At all events, let there be no proclamation of his faults on the house-tops; no itching restlessness for the sympathy and commiseration even of your dearest friends. That which may not be due to the husband is due to God's *ordinance*. Your vows to a husband bind you to speak well of him always; to think well of him as long as you can; and when you feel you can do neither the one nor the other, to see, as much as lieth in you, that no ill be spoken of him by other lips.

iii. One other duty of a Christian wife has a prominent place in these Scripture counsels—namely, that founded upon the original Paradise designation of a “*help-meet*” to her husband.*

It is her high privilege to be helpful to him in all the duties of a godly life; to help him in his conflicts with a heart-engrossing world; to help him in the sanctification of their mutual joys and sorrows. “Heirs together of the grace of life,” as they are, it is constantly assumed, that, in using the best means for making sure of this inheritance, the

* Gen. iii. 18.

influence of the wife is the greater of the two. Men, of themselves, may not "obey the Word," may not care much about the Word; but, if such unhappily should be the case, there is hope that "they may without the Word be won by the conversation of the wives."*

"By the *conversation* of the wives," observe, is the non-believing husband to be won—that is, by the lowly meekness of her deportment, by the chastened fervour of her piety, by the delicate tenderness of her conscience, and by the deep and daily anxiety she is known to feel for his spiritual welfare. "Known to feel," I say, for it may be that, to *him*, she rarely speaks of it. Her hope stands rather in the power of earnest, constant, loving intercessions for him; in a laid-up store of prayers upon the file—waiting prayers, faithful prayers, prayers which she knows can never be thrown away, but which, both on her own soul and on his, will in due time bring a blessing back. Add to all this, the wise "word spoken in season"—the word of submission in sorrow, the word of pious thankfulness in joy, the word of calm trust in difficulty, and the word of meekness under wrong and injury from others—and you have

* 1 Pet. iii. 1.

the Paradise outline of a help-meet filled up, each strengthening each, and each helping each, "as being heirs together of the grace of life."

II. "Heirs together of the grace of life." With two counsels bearing on this high designation, and pertaining jointly and alike to both parties in this holy covenant, this lecture may be concluded.

i. The first has reference to the duty of cultivating a spirit of mutual forbearance; mutual concession to each other's foibles and weaknesses; a life of negotiated exchanges, in which both are prepared, as occasion requires, to give up something of their own.

You have taken each other "for better or for worse." Do not irritate tendencies which you cannot hope to eradicate, and learn to bear with infirmities which you may hope to mend. The lesson you have to bear in mind, throughout your married life, is one which you knew before you entered upon it—namely, that you are not two "angels" who have come together, but two children of waywardness, and weakness, and selfishness, and sin. And, therefore, if man and wife cannot yield to each other, and concede likings to each other, and admit the possibility of their being sometimes in error to each other, there is nothing left for them but to drag on

their querulous and fretful existence through the waters of strife, but never coming to the fair haven of domestic unity and peace. Above all, after a dispute, or difference of opinion, guard against any remaining soreness. The heathen of old had a significant custom at their marriage solemnities. The priest, in offering up the customary sacrifice, first extracted the gall from the victim, and cast it behind the altar. It was to intimate, that from holy matrimony all wrath and bitterness must be religiously put away—that each was pledged to bear the other's burdens, and each to deal leniently with the other's faults.

ii. Lastly, as being “ heirs together of the grace of life,” we urge upon all Christian husbands and wives, to cherish a *mutual solicitude* for each other's salvation.

Our counsels, as intimated already, are proceeding upon the case of what the Apostle calls a marriage “ in the Lord ”—that is where, on the momentous concerns of personal religion, the husband and the wife are of one heart, one soul, one faith, one hope. And here, there is a fault of married life, with regard to which, it is to be feared, husbands and wives have all much to blame themselves for—namely, that of too much

reserve towards each other on religious subjects—on the state of each other's hopes and prospects for the life of the world to come. They pray together, they read Scripture together, they are ready to compare together their impressions of sermons and religious books. But they seem afraid to go down together into the depths and recesses of each other's hearts; as if there were some secret thing there, which one would rather the other did not know: a fear, a misgiving, a disquieting, and troubling doubt, which neither has the courage to lay bare to the other's sight. True, the case may not be so. And there may be no other reason for the reserve, than a mutual shrinking from revealing all the sanctities of the inner life to one who sees, in all their shortcomings and inconsistencies, the many failings of the life without. Yet surely all this shyness is dangerous. It was the solemn warning of an aged saint of God—a warning which when, like Simeon, he was about to depart in peace, he urged upon his married children, as they stood around him—"Be often in conversation with your partners on the state of each other's souls."

Wherefore, as "heirs together of the grace of

life," exhort one another daily, and "so much the more as ye see the day approaching."* "The day approaching." What day? Why, first, the day of your earthly parting. For you will throw off all reserve then. And the anxious inquiry of the surviving partner will be:—"Have you a good hope? Do you feel grounded and settled upon the Rock? Do you know whom you have believed, and are you persuaded that He is able to keep that which you have committed unto Him against that day?"

And then, if the answer to these inquiries be one of peace, with what calm and blessed hopes will you look forward to another day which is "approaching"?—the day which is beyond; the day of decision; the day of great meetings; the day when the bud of your earthly union shall blossom into the spiritual and everlasting union of heaven. Then shall it be seen how the honourable estate of matrimony was but a faint and broken image of the marriage glory of the Lamb; whilst husbands and wives, hailing with gladness the morn of the everlasting espousals, shall enter in with Jesus, members together of His body the Church, and "heirs together of the grace of life."

* Heb. x. 25.

LECTURE VI.

THE CHRISTIAN AS A PARENT.

“For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment.”—GEN. xviii. 19.

THE Christian, as a parent, occupies an important place in the domestic constitution, and nowhere do we find the duties pertaining to the relation better illustrated, than in these Scripture interiors of patriarchal life. If, of Job, we read that “he sent for his sons, and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings, according to the number of them all;”* and if, of Joshua, we read that, addressing the assembled elders of Israel, he announced his steadfast resolve, “as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord,”†—we are prepared for that testimony of the Most High God concerning His servant Abraham, “For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they

* Job i. 5.

† Josh. xxiv. 15.

shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment."

In discoursing of the duties of those who stand in the parental relation, we may find it convenient to consider them as they stand connected with THREE periods in the life of their children—namely, during the years of CHILDHOOD, during the period commonly assigned to their SCHOOL LIFE, and then, from the close of the education period to that of their customary removal from the home roof.

I. A few words may not be out of place on the treatment of children, even from their *earliest years*.

The first strange joy of the new parents over—strange, because, in the whole compass of our emotional experiences, there is nothing like it—thoughts will arise, in their hearts, of the solemn responsibility which has come upon them, in that, through them, "a man is born into the world." And the startling conviction will be forced upon their minds that on *them*—on the precepts they shall inculcate, on the rules they shall lay down, on the example of life they shall exhibit, and on the fervour and constancy of the prayers they shall offer up—it must mainly depend whether that child prove a woe to the world, or a blessing ;

a dishonour to its parents, or a glory ; one who shall grow up, and die, and leave a seed of evil-doers behind him, or “a tree of the Lord’s planting, a tree of righteousness, that He may be glorified.”

Very solemnly, in order to a blessed future for their child, will they give themselves to prayer for the benediction of heaven on its *baptism* ; and especially that they may be led to the selection of *one* pious friend, at least, who, while consenting to stand as sponsor for the new Christian, will not be unmindful of the obligations of spiritual fatherhood—especially if, in the early years of his charge, death should call father and mother away. From this period, however, a field of boundless range and responsibility opens out before the Christian mother. On her chiefly must depend, for the next few years, everything which could form the character of her little one, or determine its condition for immortality. It must be hers to watch the first outbreaks of infant temper ; hers to implant the habit of unreasoning filial subjection ; hers to check instantly, the first tendencies to deception and concealment—to secure for conscience the empire of a virgin throne, and to fill the uncorrupted mind with thoughts of God and

heaven. The language of every pious mother will be that of Hannah—"For this child I prayed, and the Lord hath given me my petition; therefore also I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord."* One ambition only should fire a mother's soul—that, as from the Lord she received her child, to the Lord should she give him back again.

i. On two points, only, is it needful to touch in connection with the formation of the Christian character in CHILDHOOD.

First, that, from the beginning, parents should cultivate in children the habit of prompt and unquestioning *obedience*. Hardly can this be begun too early. Simultaneously with so much of developed intelligence—appear at what age it will—as shall enable a child to understand when a thing is *forbidden*, the discipline of restraint and subjection should begin. It can do a clever thing, at bidding, to gratify a mother's vanity. It should refrain from a wrong thing, at bidding, in obedience to a mother's law. And it must be compelled to do so. A rebellious will, an impatience of contradiction or control, is one of the earliest as well as one of the most inveterate tendencies of our Adam-nature. And

* 1 Sam. i. 27, 28.

it is one, which, at any cost of personal ease or quiet, parents must resolutely lay themselves out to subdue. The non-compliance with a command arises from no misunderstanding, by the child, of what is meant, as we might at first be inclined to suppose. It is the imagination of its little heart exalting itself against authority ; a puny reaching after supremacy for its own determined self-will ; the first effort of infant rebellion against the dictates of conscience, and the unrecognised voice of God.

ii. The other counsel for these early years has reference to the methods of inculcating *religious truth and practice*. With regard to direct instruction, we should be careful never to press upon children an amount of religious teaching which is beyond their years, beyond their powers of intelligence, which carries them beyond that point of sustained interest, at which attention can only be secured at the price of weariness and fatigue. Doctrines, as such—for example, those of the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement—are, as a rule, to be omitted from this early teaching. They are better left to get a lodgment in the mind afterwards, as unconsciously formed inferences from Scriptural facts. By the interchangeable

use of the three names of the Blessed Trinity, as if they were one and the same Being, by constant allusions to the Lord Jesus, even in His human aspects, as being true and very God; by assuming that the babe in arms would have perished, but for the sacrifice of the Cross, and by incorporating prayers for a "new heart" in the child's daily prayer—we insensibly get the rudiments of Christian doctrine into children's minds—rudiments which may fairly be left to the mental process of maturer years to formulate into a creed.

In regard to religious *habits* in these early years, the first care of the Christian parent will be to teach their children how to pray, and how to make them take an interest in their prayers. From the beginning they should be taught to look to the exercise as a *privilege*. Indeed the interruption of it might, in some cases, be made to take the form of a penalty, that so, taught to associate the happiest feelings with the employment, they may be made to feel uneasy under the omission, and be dissatisfied with themselves all the day long. As to the prayers they should be taught to use, care should be taken that they be brief, simple, frequently varied, and abounding with personal

references of all kinds. Hardly can parents err in excess, in this last particular. There is nothing so calculated to give children an impression of the realness and substantial worth of prayer, as this intermingling of daily incidents and scenes with their morning and evening devotions, the making God a party concerned in their every-day experiences and needs. The Apostle leaves no room for exceptions in these minute references: "In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."*

II. But we pass on to consider the duties of parents towards their children at the second stage, or the period usually assigned to their *school life*.

The character is now beginning to assume its marked and definite form; and it should be the anxious study of parents to analyse and group together any observed peculiarities in children, in order to refer them to some more general mental tendency. Thus they will observe, in one, the first buddings of conceit and pride; or they will detect, in another, the prevalence of a mean and ungenerous

* Phil. iv. 6.

selfishness ; or they will find, in a third, a love of the marvellous, which tempts constantly to exaggeration, and even to the very verge of untruthfulness ; and, in a fourth, a strong carnal element, which, though seen only in vehement longings for a “ mess of pottage,” betrays all the rudiments of a fleshly mind, and, if not checked in time, will issue in the forfeiture of an everlasting birth-right. Much watchfulness and discrimination will be required at the crisis of life, we are now supposed to be dealing with. For if, on the one hand, the powers of intelligence are beginning to expand, and self-will is buckling on its armour for the strife, yet so also, on the other, there is usually, at this period, a corresponding advance of moral susceptibility, and a keener sensitiveness to the authority and dictates of conscience. It marks often that epoch of the spiritual life, when “ the blade ” is passing into “ the ear,”*—the seed of regeneration springing up, and giving promise of fruit unto life eternal.

Matter of earnest prayer to Christian parents will it be that they may be guided rightly in the selection of a school for their children, especially in cases, where it is deemed expedient that there

* Mark iv. 28.

should be a removal from the home-roof for this purpose. Such separations are not without their advantages, particularly for boys. Association with numbers tends to give a manliness to the character of boys; prepares them for the crosses, and rebuffs, and hard usage they must look for in the world; and though, of necessity, bringing them into the contact, and hearing, and sight of much that is evil, yet, in good schools, counteracting influences are never wanting, by means of which, any well-disposed youth, while forewarned of the temptations of ripening manhood, is wisely forearmed for the strife.

All this, however, will not supersede the obligation upon a Christian parent, by means of affectionate and judicious correspondence, to keep up a strong *home influence*. The letters, sent to a son at school, should breathe a spirit of loving solicitude for his spiritual welfare—a hope that, though removed from the observance of an earthly father's eye, he may never forget that he is under the eye and tutelage of a Father, which is in heaven. In Canon Ashwell's life of Bishop Wilberforce, there is no fact more striking than that the number of letters written, by his pious father, during the period of the bishop's school

life, amounted to nearly *six hundred*; and, from the examples given, they are models of a Christian father's letters.

But in relation to the duties of parents to their children, we must not omit to touch upon what Holy Scripture teaches, as to how they should order the discipline of *correction or reproof*.

The necessity of some corrective discipline is, in Scripture, assumed constantly; and warning examples are left to us, showing what we must expect, if it be neglected. "Chastise thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying."* Adonijah was a spared child. "His father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so?"† And we see what requital he made for this mistaken tenderness. Hophni and Phinehas were sons, left to do as they liked, and the consequence was that they brought down the grey hairs of their father with sorrow to the grave.‡

But now, with Scripture for our guide, let us see what must be the nature and limits of this fatherly correction.

i. First, it must be temperate, calm, with

* Prov. xix. 18.

† 1 Kings i. 6.

‡ 1 Sam. iii. 13; iv. 17.

nothing of *anger or passion* in it. "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath;"* and again, "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged."† What a reproach to many Christian parents is that saying of a heathen, to one who had offended—"If I were not angry I would chastise thee." Let all parents exercise a godly jealousy in this matter. Young persons, and even children, are quick to discover the flushed look and perturbed manner of a passionate father; and, however much they may dread, they have no respect for his correction. They know it is too heated, to have any justice in it, or to be, as it ought to be, a necessity imposed by parental love. It is felt to be the wild tyranny of a strong arm, giving vent to its capricious indignation, without temper, without mercy, and without law.

ii. Again, in order to correction, of whatever kind, being really effective or beneficial, it must be seen to be administered upon principles of the most righteous fairness. It must commend itself to the offender's natural sense of justice, as a penalty for the infringement of some known law; as dealt out without any partiality or respect of persons; as the necessary fulfilment of a charge which God has

* Eph. vi. 3.

† Col. iii. 21.

laid upon parents, and which, in the way of mental suffering and distress, is far more trying to *them*, than it is to the children. Especially in the matter of partiality and favouritism, should parents be scrupulously watchful of themselves, when dealing out their awards of praise or blame. There is nothing discerned more quickly, or resented more keenly. The making of "a coat of many colours"* is, to the giver as well as to the receiver, the beginning of a life of many sorrows.

iii. One other rule, for the administering of reproofs, we would offer, especially for grave offences, namely, that it be secret, apart, with as *little of open humiliation as possible*.

You will remember our Lord's words—"If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone."† We always inculcate this rule upon Sunday-school teachers. And it has a yet stronger emphasis for parents. The mortified pride which kicks against the pricks, in the presence of others, will often yield to the piercing when alone. And many an erring son, we are persuaded, has stifled and overborne his newly-awakened feelings of contrition, because he could not bear that brothers and sisters should see

* Gen. xxxvii. 3.

† Matt. xviii. 15.

the tear. But let him be alone with his father. Let him feel that the only eyes to witness his shame are those of compassion, and kindness, and gentle love; and, in a little time, he will be humbled. You will see his stubborn spirit giving way. The coals of a living fire are doing their melting work upon him. You will not pursue your advantage too far. The reed is bruised; the flax smokes. It is the kind word that is wanting now. And this spoken, you will both kneel down together; and, as the erring one rises from his knees, he feels that his sin is blotted from his father's remembrance, and he hopes, for Christ's sake, from the books of heaven too.

III. On the treatment of young persons AFTER the period of school life, we have only a few words to add.

By some parents, CONFIRMATION is delayed till after that period; and, thankfully as we acknowledge the pains taken with catechumens, at our best schools, yet there are manifest advantages in favour of a home preparation for this sacred rite. The children have more leisure for prayer, for devout retirement, for silent and secret searching of heart, than is always possible, amid the keen

competitions of school life, or the engrossing routine of school employments. Whilst the opportunity, to a parent, of private conversation and prayer, during the progress of the examination, may be made subservient to the deepening of holy impressions in the minds of the catechumens, and making the days of Confirmation, and the first Communion, the two bright red-letter days of their spiritual life.

Of course, during the whole time of emergence from the school period, the form and manner of exercising parental authority will gradually be undergoing a change. There will be a careful avoidance of all needless and irritating restrictions upon the young; a considerate relaxing of the reins upon their reasonable choice and liberty. For *commands*, it should be enough to substitute *wishes*. In the cultivation of friendships, and in the choice of recreations and amusements, a large margin should be left for honourable confidence—certain broad principles of moral conduct being laid down for our children, which we confide in their discretion to interpret, and leave to their religious conscience to apply. There is enough of good, remaining in our fallen nature, to appreciate generous trust. And, for *one* son, who will be kept

within right bounds by the restraints of the domestic bit and bridle, there are *ten*, who will go cheerfully in the way their parents wish them, because the reins are neither felt nor seen.

All this will prepare the way for that dutiful deference, to a parent's judgment, which, in the great choices of life—the choosing of a calling, or the forming of matrimonial engagements—will be considered, by every Christian son or daughter, to be a part of “the first commandment with promise.”* Of course there is a limit to the deference, as there is a boundary line to the interposing authority, in such cases. But the conflict will rarely arise, so only it be felt by the children that, whether in opposing their wishes, or in complying with them, the actuating motive of their parents is one and one only—namely, how they may best promote their true happiness for this life, as well as their spiritual training for the life to come. The inward thought of a Christian parent's heart should be—God gave not these children to me to make them great, He gave them to me to make them good. If wealth comes, let it come; if honours come, let them come. This only would we impress upon them, as the rule and measure of all

* Eph. vi. 2.

their seekings—"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

Be it ours, then, to choose for our children "that good part which shall not be taken away." Lightly esteemed by us be the advantageous opening, which would prove a snare to our sons—a scorn on the unsanctified alliance, which is only to make our daughters rich. Let us rather, in every plan we form for them, and in every hope we cherish, look forward to the day of our joint appearing before the throne of God; and when, with the purest joy the parental heart can anticipate, we shall be able to say—"Lord, here am I, and the children which Thou hast given me."

LECTURE VII.

THE CHRISTIAN AS A MASTER.

“The church in thy house.”—PHILEMON, verse 2, *part*.

A WELL-ORDERED, godly household is among the most beneficent creations of our Christianity. The religion of the Gospel has done much for the world every way—in elevating the tone of its moralities; in rectifying the mistakes of its legislation; in giving new scope and direction to all its kindly charities; and generally, in promoting the cause of civilisation, and intelligence, and moral progress. But if we would see one of the more bright and peaceful triumphs of our religion, we must go and inspect the economy of one of those smaller communities, where the master is both king and priest; where love is the great rule of conduct; where every domestic arrangement testifies to the felt presence and fear of God; where parents and children, masters and servants, each, like the priests of old, serving God “according to the order of his course,” make

up together an ecclesiastical society; or, as the Apostle here describes it, "the church in thy house."

I. Let us first contemplate the CHRISTIAN MASTER, as he is the ordained priest of the household; as having the direct ordering and oversight of all things, pertaining to the religious instruction of its members.

In support of *family* religion, as a branch of the domestic constitution, it is only needful to urge the consent of all pious antiquity; the concurring sanction of all religious dispensations; the ascertained practice of patriarchs and prophets, of evangelists and holy men, whether dwelling in tents or in houses of cedar; in upper rooms at Jerusalem, or in lonely huts by the sea-shore. With all these, it will be found that religious teaching and worship constituted a stated part and exercise of the family life. Thus, beginning with the first parents of our race, it is plain that, only by a systematic course of domestic instruction, could the truth of God have been preserved to the succeeding generations of mankind. We read of no temple and no altar, no ephod and no priest; and yet, in process of time, we find Cain bringing an offering to the Lord "of the fruit

of the ground,"* and Abel an oblation from "the firstlings of his flock."† Job, as we have seen, was a most diligent family priest: for after it is said of him that "he rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings for each of them, according to the number of them all," the sacred writer adds, "this did Job continually:"‡ that is, he both taught his family, and prayed with them; instructed them in the doctrine of remitted guilt by means of the blood of sprinkling, and sanctified them by the assembling of them together for purposes of domestic worship.

Yet more to our purpose is the case of Abraham, because of the separate mention of the SERVANTS, as being, together with the children, the objects of his pious solicitude: "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment"§—plainly intimating that all who gathered under the patriarch's roof, were considered by him, as a "church in the house"; and that, whether manservant, or maidservant, or the stranger sojourning within his gate, he regarded each as belonging

* Gen. iv. 5.

† Gen. iv. 4.

‡ Job i. 5.

§ Gen. xviii. 19.

to God's heritage, and himself, for the time being, as a trustee for their souls. Whilst, if an example be required, taken from times when public worship among the Jews had taken a more settled form, and when family worship might have seemed to be less needful, we have it in the case of David, who, on the removal of the ark from the house of Obed-edom, and after closing the religious services connected with that event on Mount Zion, went down to engage in a special religious service with his children and servants: "Then David returned to bless his household." *

Indeed, there can be little doubt that it was from the example of the Jews, or from traditional remembrances of those before them, that the heathen, of all ages, have derived their notion of tutelar domestic deities. Both Greeks and Romans, as we know, had their separate household gods, to whom they offered up a distinct daily sacrifice, with a view to propitiate the favourable regards of Heaven towards all who dwelt under their particular roof; so that even those who, at Athens, offered blind adorations to "the unknown God," or those who, at Ephesus, bowed the knee to a silver shrine, may well rise up in the

* 2 Sam. vi. 20.

judgment against every head of a family among us, who casts off the responsibility of providing for the religious instruction of his household, or who forgets that to all the members of it, as much as to the households of Philemon, or Aquila, or Nymphas, belongs the designation, "The church which is in thy house."

II. But let us pass on to notice, more particularly, how the CHRISTIAN MASTER may best carry out the duties pertaining to the family priesthood.

i. This will be done first by a scrupulous regard to the *religious opportunities of our servants*. If we desire that the church, which is in our house, should prosper, we must endeavour, as far as in us lies, so to order our household arrangements, as not to encroach needlessly upon the proper seasons, either of public or private worship; in other words, not to make such demands upon the time and strength of our domestics, as that the outward duties of religion become, if not an impossibility, at least an irksome and distressing weariness. Of course, it would be utterly impossible to lay down any rule in such matters. But still, the question may fairly be asked of every Christian master and mistress, should they not *try* to secure to their

servants, as a rule, at least *one* attendance at church, on the Lord's day? Should they not, as often as possible, afford them an opportunity of partaking of Holy Communion? Exceptional privations will arise, under the best arrangements. But if it be seen that we do not willingly multiply such exceptions, that we are evidently sorry when they arise—the manifest desire to give all the religious opportunities we can to our household, will be a testimony to a wish, on our part, to take thought for the spiritual welfare of our servants, which will rarely fail to be appreciated. It shows to them that we are mindful of our responsibilities—that we make a conscience of providing them with the means of grace, whether they will make use of them or not. We are a “church in the house.” It is not our fault if they put themselves “out of the synagogue.”

ii. A second form of building up “the church in the household” is one which must, for the most part, depend upon the female head of the family—we mean the taking occasion of *holding religious conversations with domestics*; speaking to them, especially the young and inexperienced among them, about the sermons they hear, the books they read, the private devotions they

use, on their mindfulness of their Confirmation engagements, or their stated and frequent attendance at the table of the Lord. Not enough do Christian mistresses think of the good it is in their power to do in this way. Year after year, as Confirmation-time comes round, do we meet with domestic servants, who, so far as they can trace the instrumentality to which they owe their best impressions, have acknowledged that they were indebted for them, chiefly, to the influence and teaching of a pious mistress. They had come from a family, it may be, where no care had been evinced for their souls—the household arrangements seeming hardly to suppose that they had any souls—and the affectionate interest taken in their spiritual well-being won upon them by its very strangeness; until, by God's blessing upon such pious endeavours, they became "servants both in the flesh and in the Lord."*

iii. Hardly need we insist upon it as an indispensable branch of household religion, that all the members of it should assemble together daily for the purpose of *family worship*. This would seem to be a reasonable obligation, were it only on account of that community of interests and sym-

* Philemon v. 16.

pathies, which, for the most part, joins together all who dwell beneath the same roof. There must always be many senses, in which it is true that, "If one member of a household suffer the others must suffer with it." The family danger is common to all who dwell in it. From room to room may spread the devouring flame; from one member to another may be conveyed the breath of infection; hope upon hope may be destroyed by one reverse of fortune, and one shaft of death may break up a united home. Should not, then, these our common dangers draw forth from us some common prayer? Or shall we, after passing a night, which, in other households, has left many a heart sad, and many a home desolate, meet our little circle again—no chair vacant, no countenance sorrowing, no frame wasted with sickness, and with nothing to make us afraid—and yet refuse to recognise the good hand of our God in all this? sending our servants to their employments, and our children to their duties, without a blessing, without an exhortation, without a prayer? Oh! how shall those nations on whom Gospel light never shone, and whom Gospel hopes never cheered, be for a sign and reproach to many families of this generation, testifying that, day by

day, we met, we parted, we slept, we rose—without a word of benediction from the proper priest of the household, or a prayer to “the God of all the families of Israel,”* that He would bless “the church which is in this house.”

III. One other aspect of our subject remains to be taken, never lost sight of in Holy Scripture—that which regards the CHRISTIAN MASTER as the kind and sympathising FRIEND of his servants.

i. This will be seen, first, in acts of *thoughtful consideration* for those who are under the yoke; in the studious desire to make the pressure of it fall as lightly as possible; not over-tasking their strength, or depriving them of the rest needful for the recruiting of the bodily powers. The condition of service, in itself, we know is a necessity of social life. If Providence were to recall all its gifts to-morrow, and between the whole family of mankind were to divide equally and alike all the elements of outward happiness, one man would soon get before another, and, before a generation had passed away, there would be the same diversities of outward condition which we witness now. Yet all this should not

* Jer. xxxi. 1.

blind us to the fact that this differing one from another is a providential *accident*, and one for the right use of which, or of the advantages belonging to it, we shall have to give account. "Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven." *

ii. Again, the deportment recommended will be seen in that uniform and considerate *kindness of manner*, which, whether in giving commands, or in administering reproofs, will be always characteristic of the Christian MASTER.

The friendly and courteous relations subsisting between Abraham and Eliezer, or between Barzillai and Chimham, or between St. Paul and the runaway slave, are very noteworthy in this respect. There is nothing, in such examples, to countenance that easy, levelling, transatlantic familiarity, which some persons think it necessary to maintain with their domestics—a familiarity, which good servants neither expect nor desire—but only that kind and friendly manner of speaking and dealing with them, everywhere commended to us in Scripture. Take, as an example, that refined and graceful picture contained in the book of Ruth. There, a

* Col. iv. 1.

master going into his field at harvest-time, exclaims, as he draws near to his reapers, "The Lord be with you;" whereupon the servants, taking up the language of reciprocated but respectful courtesy, reply to the master in the words, "The Lord bless thee."*

Neither in regard to the manner of *rebuking* those that offend is Holy Scripture altogether silent; at least, so far as cautioning us against indulging in those angry and undignified menaces, which only irritate the dependent, and lose to the master, that which he would otherwise receive, of becoming reverence and respect: "And ye masters do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with Him."†

iii. Once more, in this view of the master, as a sympathising friend to his servants, ought we to overlook the opportunity of showing kindness to them in *times of sickness*? of bearing their burdens for them during any temporary ailment, and assisting them, as far as we can, when, after years of faithful service, they find they are able to serve no more? What an illustration of this

* Ruth ii. 4.

† Eph. vi. 9.

kind-hearted sympathy is preserved to us, in the conduct of the good centurion, and the considerate trouble he took to obtain relief for his afflicted servant. So pleasing to the Holy Saviour were his faith and kindness of heart, that, not only was the servant cured of his palsy, but there was given to the master an imperishable name among the worthies of the Book of life.* Very touching also is the conduct of Jacob in regard to Deborah, Rebecca's nurse. Even after death, there must be some grateful acknowledgment of those years of faithful and affectionate service she had spent in his father's family. And they buried her under an oak—called, from their sorrow for the loss of this faithful dependent, "the oak of weeping."†

IV. Let us note, in conclusion, the advantage to OURSELVES of making our servants one with us in the bonds of Christian brotherhood—of exhibiting "the church in the house" as made up, jointly, of those who rule and those who serve.

Such a view of "a church," within a church, will tend to raise the moral tone of our domestics; will keep continually before them higher motives

* Matt. viii. 10.

† Gen. xxxv. 8.

for faithful and loyal service—disposing them to cast out the spirit of deceit and eye-service, and causing them to throw into all their duties more of heart, and spirit, and loving cheerfulness. They will see we take an interest in them, over and above what is “written in the bond.” They observe in us a constant mindfulness of the fact that we “also have a Master in heaven.” They hear us pray for them, as partakers with themselves of a like faith, and sharers with them of a common hope. And they see, in our intercourse with them, the practical influence of these considerations. They see that our authority is chastened by love; that our commands are regulated by principle; that on our lips is the law of kindness, even though they be words of reproof we speak. As a rule, it will be found that the exhortation of Paul to Timothy is not disregarded by our servants: “And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren: but rather do them service because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit.” *

Nor is this all. The keeping up of the tone of household piety tends, in no inconsiderable degree,

* 1 Tim. vi. 2.

to cement and strengthen the communion of saints, and helps to bind the household of faith more closely together—all the members encouraging each other by their example, and all having a remembrance of each other in their prayers. When a master resolves that “his house shall serve the Lord,” the Lord inclines the members of that house to bless and honour the master also ; to think of him in their devout retirement, and to pray God to remember him for good. Blessings, that we know not of, often come to us through the intercessions of pious servants. Their prayers have smoothed for us the bed of languishing. Their supplications have gone up for our sick and wasting child. “Through their prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,” have unknown dangers and adversities been kept away from us ; and, as with Joseph in the house of the Egyptian, for the sake of a pious servant, all that is in our house hath prospered.

Wherefore, whatever be our opportunities of glorifying the Lord we serve, in other places—in the CHURCH, in the WORLD, in our BUSINESS—be we especially careful to witness for God in

our FAMILIES; careful to uphold the character of the domestic priesthood; careful to let all who are in the estate of service see, by our kindness to them, by our solicitude for them, by the example of holy consistency we set before them, and by our desire in all things to promote their spiritual and eternal good—that we regard ourselves as MASTERS only for a season—anticipating the time when “the church in the house” shall be merged in the universal temple of the redeemed; all of us being servants alike, and all worshippers alike, in the New Jerusalem, in the Church of the living God.

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